

**DRAFT**

**Petition No. 1347A  
GRE GACRUX LLC  
117 Oil Mill Road, Waterford**

**Request to Commence Tree Clearing**

**Staff Report  
February 19, 2021**

On November 9, 2020, the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) issued a Declaratory Ruling to GRE GACRUX LLC (GRE), pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-176 and §16-50k, for the construction, maintenance, and operation of an approximately 16.78-megawatt (MW) alternating current (AC) solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at 117 Oil Mill Road in Waterford and an associated electrical interconnection to Eversource Energy's existing substation at 325 Waterford Parkway North in Waterford.

In its Declaratory Ruling Decision and Order (D&O) Condition 2, the Council required GRE to submit a Development and Management Plan (D&M Plan) with site phasing details that will allow for the site to be cleared and stabilized prior to the commencement of solar array construction.

On February 3, 2021 GRE submitted a Partial D&M Plan that included site phasing plans. The Project will be constructed in two main phases; the Pre-Construction Site Protection Sequence and the Construction Sequence. The Pre-Construction Sequence involves the tree clearing, removal of debris from past logging operations, installation of erosion and sedimentation controls and sediment traps, and the stabilization of disturbed areas over a growing interval that is not limited to one calendar season. Once the disturbed areas are stabilized, the Site Construction Sequence would commence.

The Council's D&O Condition 4 required the following - **Perform Pre-Construction Site Protection Sequence site clearing between October 15 and March 1. If site clearing cannot be accomplished within this timeframe, submit detailed alternative procedures that will be protective of wildlife.**

On February 16, 2021 GRE submitted a request to commence tree clearing at the site while the Partial D&M Plan specific to the Pre-Construction Site Protection Sequence is under Council review. This will allow GRE to complete tree clearing by April 1 to minimize wildlife disruption at the site.

GRE's request is specifically limited to tree clearing at the site. GRE estimates that tree clearing activities will take approximately five weeks to complete.

In compliance with the Council's D&O Condition 4, GRE submitted correspondence from VHB, Inc. dated January 20, 2021 with its partial D&M Plan that addresses wildlife impacts from tree clearing through the end of March. In summary, VHB does not recommend additional protections for wildlife for tree clearing activities through the end of March. Tree clearing during this timeframe would have limited impact on wildlife since most wildlife movement and reproductive activity occurs in April. Although vernal pool breeding amphibian species can be active in late March if temperatures and precipitation are appropriate, tree clearing in the vicinity of the on-site vernal pools is minimal.

To support tree clearing activities, GRE will stabilize the construction access entrance and install silt fence along the existing on-site access road to the laydown area. No other work will be performed until approval of the Partial D&M Plan.

Related to this request, the Council's D&O Condition 1 required the following - **Submit a copy of a DEEP-issued Stormwater Permit prior to the commencement of construction.**

GRE submitted a Notice of Permit Authorization, dated November 3, 2020, from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Water Permitting and Enforcement Division of the Bureau of Materials Management and Compliance Assurance issuing a General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters from Construction Activities for the Project.